

# Music Marvel

## Final Reflection

*This reflection is an expanded version and a continuation of the text in the Graduation Plan, submitted for the P2 examination of the Public Building studio.*

### Approach

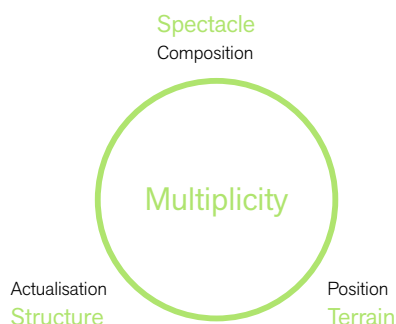
In the Graduation Plan I had defined that the project is set out to explore the capacity of a building to be used as a *didactic tool for generating an evolving understanding of history & identity of the place, all in the midst of performance*. The development of this graduation project cannot be described as a linear progression. In sum, despite the unrelenting attempts, throughout the evolving stages of the project it has, more often than not, failed to articulate a feasible answer to this core question. Until the post-P3 presentation, the extensive research on all the possible methods of circular design and sustainability frameworks had been probe-tested within the project site in Binckhorst. Most of the time rendering the incompatibility between the scale of the potential human (visitor) experience & the scale and method of construction. In other words, what the building was offering was more serving the urgency for a specific construction method, rather than the performance scale of the people.

This late realization is seen as value, rather than shortcoming - because finding all the incompatibilities allowed to choose a more precise and fitting typological match that in the end does address the set-out question in a more feasible way. Moreover, the whole stretch of the design research has enabled me to find firm ground on understanding a wide range of acoustical spaces and formats of performance. And, finally, to articulate an irreducible position on the fundamentals of a Music Marvel and the relationship to circularity beyond the issues and scale of a single building.

### How? (on method)

Very early in the process, the project started with a fundamental contradiction:

The global urgency requires buildings to be **circular**, designed for deconstruction (DfD) with **generic interchangeable** and **disconnectable** parts—the local urgency of the music marvel graduation project requires to design of a building, with supreme acoustic capabilities, achieved through an accumulation of **custom integrated** solutions.



Black values are referencing the 3 defined core points of the Public Building Studio Source: Graduation Manual AUBS 2019-2020.pdf

In the beginning of the project I had a bare knowledge of the circularity discourse and building possibilities. The design of a large-scale public venue was chosen to drive the extensive research on circularity. In order for it to be an iterative process, the research findings were being projected back onto aspects of the design, to test their compatibility with the typology and scale. Upon concluding that the applied research is contradictory to the building, or rather vice-versa, adjustments were made to either scale down the ambition of the research, or the design project. Up until the P4 presentation, the project had gone through consecutive iterations of reduction - specifically, in reduction of built scale and programmatic variety, in order to maintain feasible balance between the circularity research, integration into the urban conditions of the site and architectural ambition of the typology of a large-scale music venue.

### Reflecting on the Public Building method

Entering the Public Building graduation studio I was determined to explore fundamental new ways of constructing an experience of music. In the graduation manual the studio has defined 3 main priorities - Position, Composition & Actualisation, all circling around the core idea of Multiplicity. This vortex of method is what I adopted in my own design & research process - balancing a theoretical position, with design exploration and practical case studies of contemporary built methods. By the end of the graduation studio I had managed to articulate my own reflection to the framework of the studio - adjusting the more universal Public Building 'trifecta' to fit the typology of a Music Marvel. *Terrain, Spectacle & Structure*.

### Why? (argumentation)

The main ambition with this project was to *engage with the complexity of large scale public programming*. This has led to the specific choice of site; choice of the refer-

ence open-air concert hall typology & to the multiplicity and range of offered performance formats of the project. As sub-considerations of this ambition are the following questions:

- What is the identity of a completely new urban development and how to express it publicly?
- What are the limits of an urban music-venue?
- Can history, identity, performance and city branding all be sustainably combined in a music-venue?
- What is the role of 'public-music' in the city?

### **Relationship between research and design**

Starting with the summarization of the group-work of case studies, the design project was driven by the idea of the 'universal music pavilion'. But rather than posing as a *universal solution*, the ambition was to act as an early adopter of circularity in large scale mass-venue planning. The opportunity to focus on the development of a conceptual and spatial proposal with the Music Marvel as main subject seemed a highly suitable exercise to do so. Besides that, it was also seen as a practice of spatial negotiation between the needs of private stakeholders and public desires for 'public-ness'. The initial project presentation of the responsible municipal planner (Rikka Tuomisto) showed that almost all of the Binckhorst territory will be redeveloped 'from scratch'. As an emphasis, it was positioned to us as a new experimental masterplan for developing urban proposals in a highly collaborative and interdisciplinary manner. I saw this invitation as an opportunity to set up a design trajectory that would try to simulate that ambition for a cross-disciplinary approach, where there is no hard distinction between infrastructure, landscape and architecture. Rather, a focus on 'seducing' the public audience with bold illustrations of collaborative design practice, so that gradually an aesthetic interest could be transformed into an active part of life in New Binckhorst.

### **Integration of feedback in the process**

#### *Reflection on given feedback*

On a weekly basis we have had stimulating conversations about the direction and the gradual build-up of the project and the wide range of reference points presented by me and the tutors. During the formulation of the project in the P2 - P3 phase the amount of research superseded the design output, which then resulted in an ambiguous moment during the P3 presentation. The support that was present in the consistent evolution of the workshop sessions was not evident in the presentation. As mentioned in the opening chapter 'Approach' this could be explained partially due to the lack of the focus on the visitor experience. As I answered in the feedback session about what the project was about: "if anything, this project is a material driven exploration of the possibilities to envelop a music venue, strictly corresponding to the circular and sustainability lessons and urgencies presented to us at the beginning of the design studio". Despite the clear answer, a loss of faith and a substantial withdrawal of support happened, as exemplified by comments such as "but I don't see a project" and "don't worry, we are not failing you yet". This did play a noticeable role in the continuation of the set trajectory of the development, and the overall approach to the project itself.

#### *How feedback was translated in my work*

Throughout my interactions with the tutors and lecturers, I have been actively noting down valuable aspects that are relevant to the project. Regularly these ideas have been tested or 'planted' in the process, and majority of them have stayed in the project as crucial aspects of the design. I would like to share a selected transcript of the most defining moments of feedback, gathered during and after the P3.

7 Apr 2022, P3 Feedback & the accumulated sub-considerations:

1. Make use of what is there in the area (*Nathalie*)
  - Challenge and question the accepted status and condition
  - Create *opportunity* for nature to grow back again

- Stimulated landscape/people movement
- Reduce number of activities but make them more active
- 2. From closed to open. Why open? Is it better than closed? (*Sang*)
  - (*me*) Open-Up & Clean-up = in short, give quality access to the area
  - (*me*) Not fully enclose space that is already there but has options to open-up
  - (*me*) For generations VS for 1 generation of city dwellers
  - What will people need? Miss? Public meeting - adult playground
  - Spaces people can *engage* with and *interpret*
  - Invite community. A gathering place of community where it can be seen and see each other.
- 3. Unique Temporary Quality? (*Florian*)
  - Place / Meaning (Amsterdam Dam)
  - Place / Indeterminate
  - Has to be interesting
  - Rails are the most dominant identity of the Spoorboogzone
  - What happens during other days?
  - What remains after use?
  - Show process of temporality. State - 1,2,3,final (timeline?)
  - Everything is structure (integrated experience)
- 4. Question: How Binck will change with the densification plans. Important question, because of a large presence of new high-rise
  - (*me*) What could be the music marvel in Binckhorst?

### Lessons learned from my work

1. Acquiring an overview of the core typologies of music performance (from classical to open-air).
2. By definition, a circular music marvel is compromised and 'impure'. When the typology, which always requires adjusted, custom solutions, is coupled with the sustainability and circularity goals, it becomes impossible to achieve a fully demountable construction with a carbon negative footprint. Except festival structure, which is a completely developed and tested short-term temporary music typology. (Reusable long-lasting product with embodied CO2 energy.)
3. Understanding of acoustically Universal volumes for music performance types.
4. Universal is too big to execute in a demountable way. So, hard choices have to be made: Choice → Selection of typology → Compactness & Versatility of scale.
5. Nr.4 is as close a music marvel can come to reacting to the urgency of non-biobased material reduction.
6. Intimacy & Experience is also part of performance. When starting the next music project from a more informed material culture standpoint, this consideration can become a more dominant driving force in the earlier stages of the project.
7. Too flexible becomes self-canceling and the overall experience becomes illegible and impossible. It is essential to have a clear sequencing of activities and a distinct separation between the zones of the dynamic range of performances, in order to protect their own value proposition. Setting clear boundaries is essential to maximizing the potential of multiplicity.

### What is a Music Marvel?

Unquestionably, a Music Marvel is a *spectacle*. It is either a spectacle of vastness (festival), impression of grandeur (classical) or the intensity of isolation (black box). In more urban cases this typology has the capacity to transform the whole terrain around itself (Paris Philharmonic), or be a completely isolated and introverted 'black box', like Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam. Despite this range of impact, I have discovered that it is inherently a potent and resilient typology. During the post-presentation feedback of our case study group work, together with prof. Nicola Marzot, we summed up our own "ziggo philharmonic™" paradox, which is the most reduced description of a Music Marvel: "people go to arenas and mass concerts for a *specific reason* but the environment is generic; with concert halls people go specifically for the environment, yet the reason might be generic..as unremarkable as just visiting the building to see it." For it to be successful, at least one of these aspects has to be in place—either the appeal to the senses through the tactility of the architecture, or the offered range and intensity of aesthetic experiences of the program.

(see more elaboration on this line of thought in the Graduation Report, chapter. 'P2.D1 Individual Research Book')

### *What is my Music Marvel?*

My proposal is building on the lessons learned from the case studies of the studio, specifically on the ones that were more urban in their character - bringing a regenerative change in the terrain around themselves. As the project progressed, especially after P3, this ambition was merged with the typology of an open-air concert hall, which then led to the final design proposition. In this 'genre' of a building, the factors of infrastructural functionality, specifically the clearances for large scale logistics access and ease of mobility, play a crucial role in dimensioning the volume of the venue. As set out from the beginning, the personal ambition of this graduation studio was typological innovation. In the case of this project, the unconventional decision to place an open-air venue in a newly developing area of metropolitan congestion is the element of exploration.

### **Multiplicity in Project?**

#### *Identity*

To what extent respecting 'historical-identity' of a place is even responsible in a planning process? What and how much to protect? Need to do both - not duplicate, extend or keep alive for keeping alive sake - but *play* and *create new places* as platforms of interaction. Don't be paralysed by the need for historical continuation, but be liberated by the priority to design places with (con)temporary meaning.

#### *Dynamic Range*

Offer a wide spectrum of the 'music envelope': from an open-air festival to an impromptu flash mob; an evening courtyard concert or a cafe music session.

#### *Design to Regenerate*

Regenerative design for a positive climate impact. To do so, the linear distinction between landscape, infrastructure and architecture has to be substituted by a circular and interdisciplinary design process, where the decisions are based on the compatibility of scale and not the distinction of the disciplines.

#### *Adaptability*

Adaptable usage, both structural and programmatic, is more durable by principle. Design relationships of potential connections of expansion and contraction of a variety of activities.

### **Graduation Project in a wider context**

The fields of social, professional and scientific communities have one main word on their agenda: sustainability. It starts with a fundamental recognition of the needs of people, the social aspect, and then expands to a scale of free-market production, guided by evolving scientific research and development. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the project was set out to explore contradicting frameworks between social expectations and limitations of circular construction. Posed as an explorative 'pilot project' of expanding circular design language for music buildings in the city, the project itself becomes a transparent example of typological compromise. The transferability of the project results lies in

- The extensive research underlying the iterative choices made in scaling down the venue to a feasible balance between fixed elements and interchangeable ones;
- The personal circularity roadmap, as defined by the author at the end of the design project (see last page of this document);
- The project itself is a visualization to the question formulated at the P2 presentation: "What is the role of the city in music? In reverse, what then is the music's contribution to the act of civic performance?"

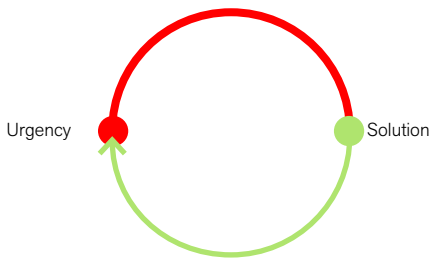
### **Ethical issues and dilemmas**

(i) Doing the research & (ii) Elaborating the design.

#### *On Circularity*

Circularity is almost always presented in diagrams with a circle. From Urgency to a Solution. Throughout an extended process of design and research in this project, I discovered this representation to be flawed, or at least partial. How?

(fig.1) Circularity as popular Diagram



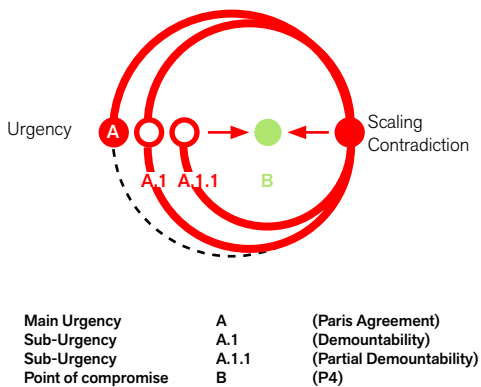
1. Once you return to the starting point, it has shifted already. So, circular is *not* static, it is dynamic. The potential of the context is changed with the presence of intervention, no matter how big or small. One cannot *count on everything to stay*, but to change; (fig.2)
2. Circularity as diagram is a flat projection. Circularity as practice is not thinking in a circle, but finding vertical connection within the built environment. That vertical connection is the 'multiplicity shaft' of the project. Real circularity is a spiral. (fig.3)
3. Circular is not a loop, but a spiraling evolution of our environment;
4. The bigger the scale, the smaller the probability of efficient collaboration and coordination to achieve DfD beyond 'parts' scale. (fig.4)

Circular is flat when viewed from the top, when in reality it is spiral. If the designer, or any involved specialist, positions themselves outside of this process, then circularity is only a flat varnish. Once deep in the process

(iii) Applying results in practice

- Sustainability studies show that architecture exponentially becomes impossible.
- What is the role of an architect in the context of today, when the ultimate sustainable building would be not building at all?
- Important to recognize that each building is not to be designed to *return* where it started (flat circularity). Rather layer the built environment in a spiral motion, so that deconstruction of building doesn't lead to the same starting point (impossible), but that with its presence it generates a multiplicity of new starting points.

(fig.2) Circularity in the Music Marvel project



An example of a multiplicity position from this graduation project:

1. Current project site used as closed railway terrain for 'trains to go to sleep'
2. Open it up and start cultivating a new experience and identity of the place
3. Introduce a garden to offset the CO2 expenses of placing the Music Pavillion on the site
4. Instead of being foreign, the garden becomes an integrated and continuous part of the urban identity
5. Cultivate creative program
6. Harvest experience
7. Extend the program through continuation in the landscape
8. Establish a Music Garden

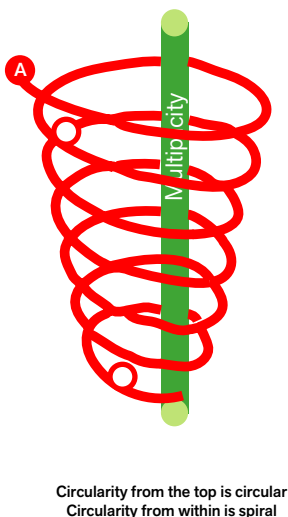
As soon as you make a building, it starts to deteriorate and *decompose*. Once you plant a garden it starts to *grow*. Completion of a building is an *endpoint*, cultivation of a garden is a *start*.

**Position on personal future practice**

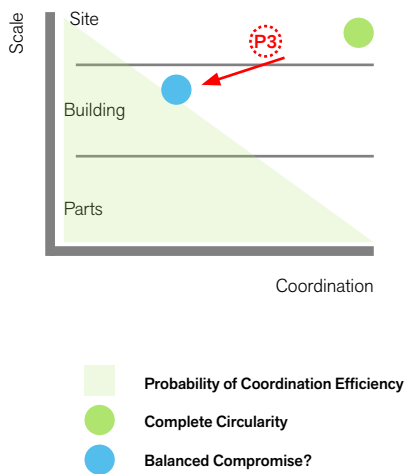
The following decades are crucial for the global environmental crisis and our industry (building) has a large role in this process. The lessons learned through the research, collaboration with the tutors and the overall design process, are defining ones for my future practice. They have expanded my understanding of the urgencies, and potential architectural methods of addressing them. Rounding up this reflection paper I would like to share these core values with you:

- Continue developing a practice that is based on finding a balance between resource efficiency and cultural impact on a variety of scales: from an individual, to a community - both local and global.
- Maintain an active line of research for finding meaningful ways to construct for deconstruction (DfD), with emphasis on hybridity between predominantly bio-based material stock, in pair with low carbon embodied products and building techniques.
- More importantly, I have learned that circularity is not only a requirement in building culture, but also in design practice. This graduation project was set out from the start to *uncompromisingly review current circularity maxims*, only to discover that compromise is unavoidable. This realization came rather later than sooner, due to the extensive amount of research and design probing that had to be done to arrive at this conclusion. To stubbornly maintain this trajectory of exploration was a conscious decision, understanding that this graduation project

(fig.3) Realisation: Circularity in Practice



(fig.4) Scaling Contradiction



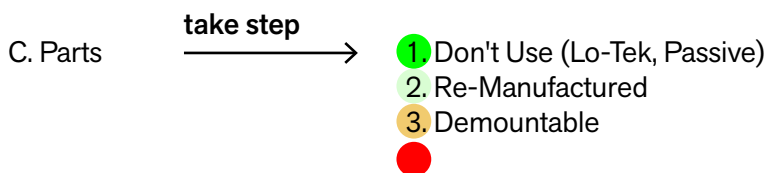
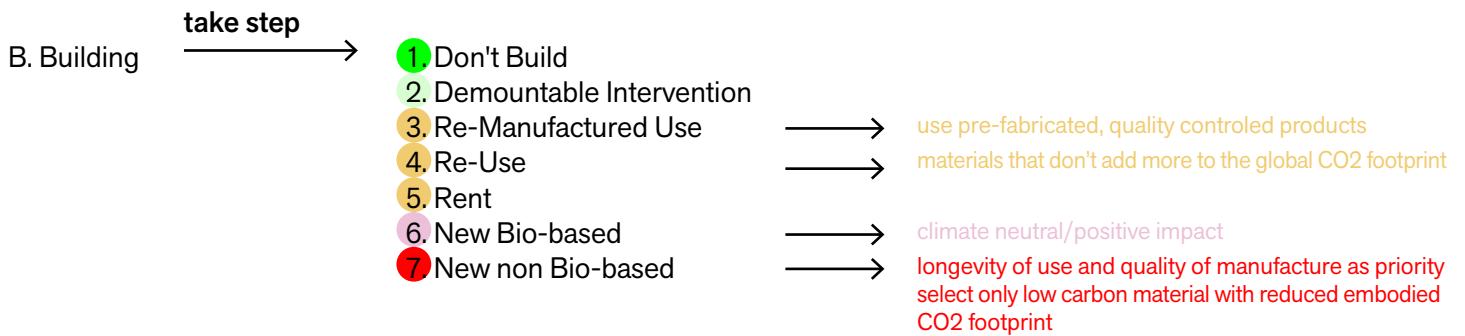
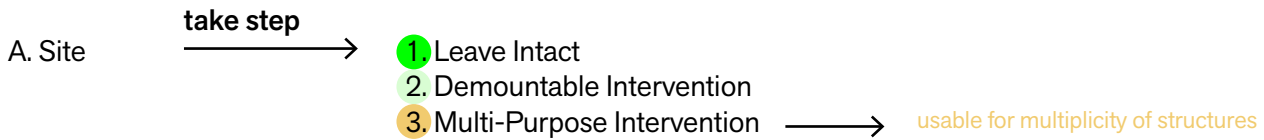
is the last opportunity to take an extensive amount of time to do so without the pressures of professional practices. The realization, which is the ultimate value gained from this Public Building studio, is that contradiction and compromise is inevitable in the global transition to a circular economy and sustainable existence. Currently, a fully circular public building is not achievable. The next best option is to take a strong and educated position towards what is the strongest value offered by the project; and how to execute that with the least amount of non-bio based material and CO2 emission. Ultimately, the future of circularity is embedded in the developing specialists of today; and the keyword to securing a sustainable future is 'choices'. Through having developed this project within the strict limitations of testing applications of circular methods to enclosing a large-scale public venue, a conclusion has been reached. The founding core of my professional practice has to be based on ethical choices. Each circular project has a point of dilemma, where the balance between *urgency* and *contradiction* has to be defined. The sooner that point is defined, the stronger a value proposition can be developed. Decisions in a project are made for the sake of providing a better scenario than the existing; but *what is better?* The answer to this question can only be answered post-factum, but does it come from the architect? Or is it part of the process of post-occupancy interaction, done voluntarily for the sake of becoming a more involved, informed and responsible designer?

*This has been the full scope of reflection as a result of the design project for a Music Marvel, Public Building graduation studio 2021-2022.*

### How will the final part of the graduation period be filled in?

Following the P4 examination there will be two lanes of priority:

- *Building Technology elaboration of the project.* First, a more extensive working-out of the connections, dimensions and material choices of the main structure of the pavilion. Second, a more expanded development of the service systems of the pavilion, that are controlling the quality of indoor climate. This will be done in focused workshop sessions together with the responsible tutor - Gilbert Koskamp.
  - *Final P5 Graphical package.* For the P4 presentation an emphasis was put on showing an extended storyline of the project, which has resulted in an eclectic mix of graphical content. There are a lot of valuable typological insights and research findings accumulated during this project. Currently, they are not presented in the most legible way, so an extra effort has to be put to format the final Graduation Report, with emphasis on graphical uniformity and legibility.
1. Formatting of the final Graduation Report, with emphasis on continuity of research and design development;
  2. A story-line like set of computer visualizations of the design in its urban & programmatic context. Show the variety of the defined music scenarios in images;
  3. If time allows, building a 1:200 or 1:100 scale model of the proposal (no context);
  4. Finally, writing a concise brief summary of the project, sharing the story of the Music Marvel in an easily accessible format.



- Towards a climate positive intervention
- Towards a climate negative intervention